

Godalming Minster Project

Executive Summary for Hambledon

In September 2021, Bishop Andrew of Guildford Diocese invited the churches of Busbridge and Hambledon, St. Peter and St. Paul's Godalming (SPSP) and St. Mark's Ockford Ridge (STM) to consider uniting as one parish. Following Bishop Andrew's invitation a Minster Evaluation process was approved by all PCCs in early January, comprising a Steering Group and six Working Groups (Clergy, Finance, Services and Worship, Property, 0-18 Years and Administration/Services) which reported to the Steering Group. These groups met to discuss the proposal, test various models, and to assess the benefits and risks of uniting as a single parish. This has been in conjunction with the Diocese.

The aim of the Minster is to work together in Christian unity to revitalise Christian witness across the Greater Godalming area, for the good of the town and locality. We desire to be a church which is energised by faith and bringing good to all.

The Minster evaluation Steering Group concluded that there are significant benefits to uniting. It is recognised that the four existing churches have distinctive worship styles and together we can build on this diversity. We desire to be a more diverse worshipping church community. This diversity will be preserved wherever possible to offer a variety of services.

The Minster vision is one of Christian growth, through the development and application of a more united, strategic approach to mission and ministries, with sharing of physical and people resources. The vision is that all four churches will grow and continue to develop distinctive worship styles. Hambledon will continue to develop its own services as appropriate for the village.

The primary caveats for Hambledon are:

1. A full time minister will continue to live and work in/for the parish of Hambledon, their role will be split - 70% for Hambledon Village and 30% for the Minster. This is very similar to current practice whereby the current minister works 70% for Hambledon and 30% for the Benefice of Busbridge and Hambledon.
2. Should anyone wish, they can ring fence their giving into a restricted fund to ensure that their donations only go to Hambledon Church. This is also very similar to current practice.
3. Hambledon graveyard will also be reserved for Hambledon residents and those who do not live in Hambledon but have a qualifying connection to the church.





Hambledon Church will continue to benefit from the significant staffing and administrative resources at the Old Rectory administrative hub in Busbridge. It will also continue to receive ministry from the children's and families work, youth work, older people's ministry, music and worship as well as support from the team of Lay and Ordained ministers.

The most significant service change will impact Busbridge and SPSP, as it is recommended that the existing informal contemporary service moves to SPSP during 2023 to augment the existing choral sung eucharist service and provide the main means of congregational growth. The timing of this move will depend on the re-establishment of a robust contemporary worship team.

It is envisaged that SPSP will become an active Godalming Town hub, interacting with and supporting civic authorities in a manner which established Church of England parishes are known to do well, establishing contacts with local businesses, offering a listening ear, care and support. To facilitate contemporary worship at SPSP, it is expected that the front pews will be removed under a temporary faculty and a separate faculty sought for a full church reordering project. The latter will occur only when the significant funds required are available.

The full benefit of the Minster project will likely take three to five years to materialise. This range is predicated on growth (and therefore giving) assumptions and the timing of the UK economic recovery.

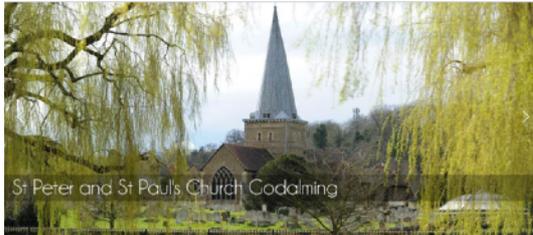
Three possible budget scenarios have been created. An optimistic scenario assumes all desired positions are filled in 2023, but is affordable if giving growth occurs at 10-15% over 2023-2025. A low case assumes giving is flat for all of 2023-2024 and then increases at a rate of 5%. There could be a projected deficit in the range of £80,000-90,000/year. This deficit can readily be eliminated by deferring or reducing the desired new Minster appointments. However, by doing so there is an eventual tipping point when there could be no noticeable Minster gain 'effect'. This deficit risk has been put to the Diocese Leadership Team, who have agreed to discuss internally additional funding of £135,000 over 2023-2025 (£45,000/year). These funds have been incorporated into the financial modelling. A 'mid-case' scenario assumes a modest 5% giving growth and demonstrates the Minster is affordable but with deficit pressure in 2022-2027. The challenge to the PCC is whether this forecast deficit is likely to materialise or whether it be accepted and managed.



There is no doubt that that the Minster evaluation has been underpinned by constant prayer. Joint Prayer Meetings have been well attended and taken place monthly throughout the evaluation period. In addition, two very successful and well attended joint services occurred in May for congregations to get to know one another



better and to experience a style of worship which they may not be normally accustomed. Q&A opportunities were held after each of these services and at APCMs. The Minster Proposal pack has been emailed to each member of each church's electoral roll. This can be made available on request from the BHC church office.



On Monday 11th July the PCCs of Busbridge Church, Hambledon Church, SPSP with STM voted on the proposal to unite and become a Minster Parish for the Godalming and wider area. The PCC members are the Trustees of their parishes, so the matter was taken seriously and they all spent considerable time in thought, preparation and prayer reviewing the significant 'Recommendation to PCC's 11th July 2022' document before voting. One PCC allows electronic votes to be cast pre-meeting and these are recorded separately. The results of the deliberations and voting are as follows:

1. *Busbridge PCC. Unanimous vote yes. No abstentions. The PCC also voted to give up its own patronage of itself*
2. *Hambledon PCC. Unanimous vote yes. No abstentions. The PCC also voted to give up its patronage of Busbridge Church up*
3. *St Peter and St. Paul's with St Mark's PCC. Unanimous vote yes with no abstentions for those present. Two electronic pre-votes cast, 1 yes and 1 no.*

The Minster proposal has therefore been passed by all PCCs by a clear individual and collective majority, with only 1 vote against. Now that we have a clear proposal which has been thoroughly tested by the PCCs there will be meetings over the coming weeks for all church members where details of the proposal will be fully explored with lots of space for questions. We will also gather for more prayer times.



Bishop Andrew will be writing to all 3 PCCs with his reaction and thoughts, and in the Autumn the PCCs decision will be brought to special Archdeacon's APCMs across all the parishes for further prayer and ratification.

With grateful thanks to all PCC members and to every member of the Minster exploration groups, for giving many hours to this matter. We are deeply grateful too for the wonderful ways in which many in the village give toward Hambledon Church. We hope and pray that with your continued support as well as all that goes with this vision of the Minster that worship in and for Hambledon, as well as that for our neighbours will thrive and secure a presence for good in our communities for many years to come.

With every blessing - Simon Taylor, Simon Willetts and David Wilkin